

Weekly Messenger

AND TEMPERANCE WORKER.

VOL. IV. No. 24.

MONTREAL & NEW YORK, FOR THE WEEK ENDING, MAY 9, 1886.

FIFTY CENTS A YEAR.

The Weekly Messenger

WILL THERE BE WAR?

The attitudes of Russia and England do not look peaceful but Lord Granville has stated in the House of Lords that Russia had agreed to renew negotiations in London concerning the Afghan frontier question, and that details had been arranged for a meeting of the boundary commission. England and Russia had also agreed that the difficulties arising from the Pendjeh affair should be submitted to an investigating and reference to friendly powers. Pendjeh has paid tribute to Herat for a hundred years and the Afghans have kept a small body of troops there. Pendjeh is therefore as much a part of Afghanistan as is Herat. The Czar, however, seems to care nothing about what either Komaroff or Sir Peter Lumsden says concerning the fight at Pendjeh, and a Russian paper says that the Czar and M. De Giers feel convinced that all Mr. Gladstone wants is to seek any solution of the occupation of Pendjeh which may technically save England's honor, and that both are unwilling to lead themselves to any play that may suit Mr. Gladstone's Parliamentary tactics, if by doing so vital points are left untouched, Russia thus getting all she wants without fighting. The English press takes much the same view of the arrangement to have the Anglo-Russian dispute settled by arbitration. The *Standard* speaks most strongly against arbitration and says it would only settle the matter for a short time. The same paper says everything has been done to drag the nation into slumber and that Parliament participates in the sleep. Gladstone, notwithstanding his warlike speeches, does not belong to the war party, and will only enter on a war with Russia if absolutely compelled to do so. Germany would like to see Russia's power crushed, as Russia is a near neighbor, but would not like to see England gain the entire supremacy on the high seas. For this last reason she would rather not have war. Again, German individuals have large interests in Russian stocks, and this interest would lead them to wish for peace. The port of Turkey has made some small preparations to fortify the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, so as to appear to be going to take a neutral stand in the event of war. Notwithstanding these preparations, however, she has allowed a British man-of-war to cruise in these straits and to see that no torpedoes are laid. There is news that Turkey has actually made a treaty with England by which the former will allow English vessels to pass through the Dardanelles in the event of war with Russia. In return for this favor Turkey will be allowed to send an expedition to occupy the Soudan by way of Suakim, and England will restore Cyprus to Turkey at the end of five years and guarantees that the states of the Porte shall be kept safe from other powers. This report has not been denied yet, and is likely correct. A cablegram from London says "the Anglo-Russian situation to-night is one of uncertainty.

There is absolutely no war news, no peace news, and no news of truce. Up to the present Russia has advanced, waged battle and taken territory, but has said nothing, while England has done all the talking and made all the explanations."

Meantime, while peace negotiations have been going on, we have news of a battle between the Afghans and Russians in which the latter were totally defeated. Of 1,700 Russians who engaged the Afghans nearly all were killed. This report, though received nearly a week ago, has not been confirmed, but from the actions of Russia since, and from the Afghans' revengeful character, it is very likely that the report is true. The battle is said to have taken place on the borders of Afghanistan. It is certain that the Russia forces have pushed on past Pendjeh and have occupied Maruchak, a town twenty miles south of Pendjeh. They have done this without any provocation from the Afghans so far as can be learned, and without any necessity as a measure of self defence. They are making a military road to Maruchak. Amongst other preparations which Russia has made is the fortifying of the north ports of the Black Sea. Nine thousand troops and six batteries of artillery were sent from Moscow to the front and sufficient railway material was sent with them to build a railway to Herat. The telegraph line has been continued to Sarakhs. Military hospitals are being prepared and Russia has made every possible attempt to secure coal. Several attempts to buy coal at Newcastle have failed. Russian agents have purchased five steamships in the United States. The Russian steamship "Strelak" has arrived in New York and it is believed is trying to obtain recruits as the steamship is short handed. The "Garnet" follows her closely. France, Germany and Austria have been discussing a project for the formation of a neutral league, and have invited Italy and Turkey to join. Neither of the latter powers has given a decided reply. Melbourne port in Victoria, Australia, has been strongly fortified and is considered impregnable. At Victoria, in the province of British Columbia, a Russian spy, who pretended to be purchasing furs, secured a plan of the harbor and fortifications which are being placed in order in anticipation of war. A large number of torpedoes will be laid in the outside harbor, and orders have been given for the construction of torpedo boats. It is a question whether Russia will endeavor to cut the Atlantic cables, a thing not very difficult to do. There is no danger of Russia's despatches being intelligible to her enemies as a key to Russian cipher, which is a mysterious combination of letters and figures in groups of five has never been discovered. It is, therefore, thought that the cables will remain untouched or at any rate the Western Union and Mackay-Bennett cables which are owned entirely by Americans. In Russia there could not have been a much more exciting week. Several Russian noblemen were ruined by gambling in stocks and three committed suicide on one day.

The English were some time ago reported to have annexed Port Hamilton, which is composed of three small islands in the Cor-

can Straights. This the Russian *Gazette* considered an unjustifiable act, and said that the taking of Pendjeh was a good answer. The Chinese also protested against the act. It now turns out that England had not occupied or annexed Port Hamilton but that the presence of an armed cruiser gave rise to the report. Subsequently she did in reality annex the port and the Moscow *Gazette* thereupon declared that if England wished to avoid war she would have to evacuate Port Hamilton at the entrance to the Japan sea; otherwise Russia would be obliged to take Herat. The inhabitants of this town waited upon their Governor and requested him to tell the Ameer that they would suffer a long siege rather than surrender to Russia. Gen. Komaroff having written a letter to the Afghans, expressing surprise at their conduct in forcing him to wage a battle against them, the Afghans have become indignant at General Komaroff's imprudence, and are becoming more cordial towards the British. The populace of Herat, however, appears to be as well inclined towards Russia as towards England notwithstanding their declarations to the contrary. It is believed that the English are putting the Bermuda Islands in a complete state of defence and has notified the European powers that she will enter the Black Sea in case of war because Russia has fortified Batoum notwithstanding that there was a treaty which forbade it. It is believed in England that the King of Denmark will be selected arbitrator if mediation be accepted. The Indian army has been got ready to march through Afghanistan and is about 60,000 strong.

AFGHANISTAN AND ITS PEOPLE.

Now that war is likely to take place between England and Russia it will be interesting to know something about Afghanistan, the country where much of the fighting would necessarily take place, and of the Afghan people through whose land the English would have to conduct their armies. There has been almost no surveying done in Afghanistan and for that reason the courses of many of the rivers are but indefinitely known. The boundary line also is very uncertain as there are many tribes holding land who, though we call them Afghans, give no allegiance to the Government of Afghanistan. Speaking roughly, however, Afghanistan is 600 miles both in length and breadth. Within this little space there is such a variety of country that a traveller passing through one part of it will call it a barren land, whilst another traveller passing through the fertile valleys sees all kinds of European fruits growing in great abundance. At Girishk on the Helmand River, which is the largest river in Afghanistan, the thermometer has been known to reach 120° Fahrenheit in the shade, whilst at Herat, on the Heri-rud river, the summer weather is more agreeable than that in other parts of Afghanistan. As Herat is 800 feet lower than Girishk this is somewhat extraordinary. The Heri-rud river after passing Herat runs quite dry at times, but, being supplemented by streams below Herat, begins again and flows northward in quite a large stream.

The Afghans are not a commercial people and prefer farming to trade. They raise wheat in sufficient quantities for themselves and it is their staple food, though travellers inform us that their bread is like leather to chew, it is so tough. The sugar cane and cotton are raised and the domestic animals are the sheep, camel, cow, and horse. The Afghan takes pride in his camel, which is of the one humped kind, and cares for it as we would for a favorite horse. Of the four millions of people, half are dwellers in houses and half live in tents, but as the universal custom is for the people to sleep on the flat housetops in summer, in true oriental style, it is a camping out life for even those who have houses. An Afghan prefers to avenge his own wrong rather than to go to the judges who are in the principal places. In character the people are very treacherous though they look candid, and it is part of their creed that they may change from one side of a contest to the other without being at all ashamed. This propensity to look after their own good alone, renders them uncertain allies. The women are fair and though a little allow their cheeks are red. The features of both men and women are sharp and the women often have a Jewish look. The head dress of the men is rather peculiar. They shave from their forehead back to the top of their head, and let the hair at the sides grow over their shoulders in long ringlets. Their beards are long and generally black, and altogether they are a strong athletic looking people though their outdoor peeping gives them many an ache and pain, and sometimes causes chronic disease. So uncertain are the antiquated fire arms of the Afghans that during the last Afghan war it used to be a joke among the British soldiers that an Afghan would poise his gun upon a rock, calculate when his enemy would be likely to arrive in front of his muzzle, fix his fuse and then go off to some little distance and sit down and smoke. If the enemy arrived in front of the matchlock just as it went off, why then he would most likely be killed, but if he didn't, and the weapon went off a quarter of an hour after he had passed it, then no harm was done, and its owner would philosophically "set" his gun again in hopes of catching the next comer and then go off to his rock, smoke and await developments.

LAST TUESDAY about a thousand strikers assembled at the Chicago depot with the intention of capturing the militia if any came. They afterwards went to Walker & Singer's quarries, and routed the militia. Four companies were sent to meet the strikers and charged them with bayonets. The crowd met the soldiers with bricks, stones and clubs. A retreat of the workmen was made to the town, and a volley was fired on them by the detachment sent to meet them. Four men have died from bayonet wounds.

GEN. GRANT still continues to improve in health and is occupying his mind with his book on the war. This exercise is beneficial to him and he sleeps the better for it.